1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1



178 241 main crop because the peasant can harvest them before the great heat of summer descends and the countryside lies parched and torpid under the blazing sun.

### Land Reform (Thessaly)

423 Attica was selected as the best illustration of land ownership in Greece, but Thessaly, with the richest land in Greece, almost selects itself to illustrate modern Greek land reform.[13] The size of the farm holding in Thessaly averages just over eleven acres, which is the highest of any province: the figure is less than ten acres in Macedonia, Thrace, and Central Greece; just over five acres in Epirus and the Peloponnesos; and less than five acres on the islands. No wonder that now and then I encountered what can best be termed "land-hungry peasants," particularly where they thought that the government, through its program of land redistribution, was in a position to turn over to them at a reasonable figure the fields of some estate not yet fully reduced to the proper size set by the land-reform law.

[241]

This was the case in 1953 in Thomai, a village not far from Larissa, the capital city of Thessaly. I was driving the director of agriculture in Larissa out on his inspection trip through the neighboring area where a severe rainstorm had damaged the nearly ripe wheat. The road, stretching for miles between grain fields, was headed in the direction of Trikkala and passed the Larissa Forest Nursery, whose sign linked it with the Marshall Plan. Farther on, in recently harvested grain fields, a few gleaners were bending over the golden stubble in the hot sun, gathering their winter's bread supply like Ruth who gleaned in the fields of Boaz. In rich Thessaly, there are few gleaners now, but the unwritten law permitting gleaning still exists for those poor villagers who need it.

[177] [243] [735] [671]

During the drive the discussion centered about the problem of land reform. The director was reluctant to visit Thomai because he had not yet received any final instructions from Athens to help him answer the questions he knew the villagers would ask about some promised increase in their land. The Land Reform Law of 1917 had boldly attacked the problem of the big estates, and its gradual application had eliminated tenancy throughout most of Greece by 1930. Around 1922 the influx of refugees, with their desperate need for land, speeded up the redistribution. This law still permitted certain classes of landlords to hold up to 500 acres although requiring them to dispose of acreages above that amount. As the result of further government action in 1952, the archbishop of the national church had agreed to the sale of the monastery estates, which accounted for a little more than one fourth of the 1.5 million acres to be turned over to private proprietors in this new redistribution program. Another type of landlord living in Larissa had formerly owned about half of the rich Thessaly plain; he had given up most of the land, keeping the 500-acre-maximum holding.

423 427 [671] [792]

1:Sanders Z-5)4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1



So the bishop arranged for nuns at a convent on the edge of town to teach some of the girls to spin and weave silk. For two hundred years the nuns of this convent have been leaders in the silk industry. In 1770, under the Turks, the nuns with their abbess were exiled to Constantinople, went to Broussa, and learned the manipulation of silk. Later, when they were able to come back to Kalamata, they brought with them the silkworm eggs and started the silk industry. Many local girls come to the convent to learn how to carry on silkworm production and weaving on a simple loom at home. So, the bishop thought, these same nuns would be able to teach these orphan girls the silk industry, and many other things as well. When we visited the convent, eighteen girls were living there, but buildings were nearing completion which would accommodate up to fifty girls. Queen Frederika had come to help dedicate the cornerstones. But the nuns were anxious to show us where they produced the fine silk cloth we had been admiring. It was a strange experience to go with the nuns into the big room full of textile machines and to see the dexterity with which these women clad in medieval garments managed the complex machinery, even to the point of making many mechanical repairs.

One institution which the bishop showed us with evident pride was a tuberculosis sanatorium. To reach it we had to ride from his palace through the town to a mountain a few miles distant. We could not help notice the people's affection for the bishop: men, upon seeing him, would take off their hats and women would cross themselves. Some of this, we knew, was done because he was a bishop and thus due a certain amount of reverence, but the expression of warmth on the faces of the people indicated their genuine appreciation of what the bishop was doing for them.

When we arrived at the sanatorium, the bishop explained: "Why should a few old monks have such a beautiful site to live in when tuberculosis was proving such a scourge to so many people? I told the monks they could go pray somewhere else and that we would make this into a sanatorium." Of course, the bishop admitted that he was oversimplifying the problem a bit, for even the Greek Orthodox Church has its red tape. In any event, he had succeeded in getting about twenty patients out into this healthful spot under proper care. One of the first things he did upon our arrival was to go check the menu posted in the kitchen, for he takes a personal interest in what is being served to the patients.

While at the sanatorium we noticed a number of donkeys tied outside and many peasant men and women sitting at the door of the little church dedicated to St. Elijah. We learned that many of these peasants had come quite far on this Sunday and had brought gifts of food and oil to the sanatorium as *psychiko*, a word which comes from Byzantine times and means property donated to monasteries or churches by pious pilgrims for the salvation of their souls. These peasants proved a lighthearted group, probably

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

491
492
792

17. A monk on the ageless journey to Salamis with casks from his monastery to be filled or to sell.

18. Godparents hold the child before the priest for a controlled moment in the exuberance of a baptism, Macedonia.

851
291
142
793

[p. 272-K]

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



> with their Religion, and many other Rites of which the wiser men are ashamed, and wish they were amended; yet they fear to correct and alter them . . . lest the People observing their Guides to vary in the least point from their ancient, and (as they imagine) their Canonical Profession, should begin to suspect the truth of all, and from a doubt dispute themselves into an indifference, and thence into an entire desertion of the Faith.

The dispute about the substitution of the Gregorian calendar for the Julian has shown that a substantial body of opinion (especially amongst the monks of Athos), is still violently opposed to change and reform even in matters which might to the detached observer seem to have little religious significance. With the solitary exception of 'modernist' Vatopedi, the whole monastic community of the holy mountain still insists on using the old reckoning. Elsewhere in Greece one finds scattered groups of Old Calendarists who have separated themselves from the local bishop rather than accept the reformed calendar. The *Palaioemerologitai*, as they are known, include clergy and monks and until recently were in possession of several small convents.

Though it may be that political motives have played a certain part in this curious controversy, it would be rash to deny the presence of a strong element of sincere religious feeling. Even the saints are liable to be involved in these disputes about the calendar. Witness the story of the 'modernist' *papas* who ventured to sing a hymn in honour of St. George before the eikon of the saint on the new-fangled day, and was not a little disconcerted when the saint fell flat on his face: what clearer testimony could there be to the detestation felt for the new calendar in the heavenly places?

The centuries of oppression did but strengthen the awareness (already more marked amongst eastern Christians than in the clerkly west), that the maintenance of holy tradition is the responsibility of the whole body of the faithful—not of the clergy alone. The English layman still feels himself more or less at the mercy of the parson—so far at least as what goes on in his parish church is concerned. Not so the Greek. A *papas* who ventured to deviate in the least particular from the forms prescribed by immemorial custom would suffer prompt correction from his congregation. If a bishop should fall into strange novel doctrines contrary to the traditions of the fathers, the holy people of God would rise up and denounce him. In this, as in other matters,

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



peasant farmer who cultivates his land like all his parishioners, and who exercises a ministry which is almost wholly liturgical in character. His ecclesiastical duties are limited in practice to administering the mysteries of baptism and the holy chrism; to marrying and burying, and offering week by week the unbloody sacrifice; to singing the divine office; to memorial services, blessings of homes and crops and sundry other objects, and to an occasional exorcism.

The parish priest *must* be married and at least thirty years of age, and the most that he can hope for in the way of preferment is a slight increase in his basic stipend if he is able to spend a year or two at one of the seminaries (*phrontisteria*) for parish clergy. This basic wage—which is supplemented by fees and offerings in kind, as well as by the fruit of the country parson's agricultural and other labours—is miserable enough. It was only in 1949 raised to 250,000 drachmas (the equivalent of less than six pounds sterling) a month: a pair of boots then cost about 70,000 drachmas and a pig perhaps 300,000. In such circumstances the support of a large family leaves little margin for luxuries, even when harvests are good and life runs smoothly and securely. Unsatisfactory as the economic position of the village *papas* remains, it is considerably better than it was fifty years ago. Until 1909 the parish priest was entirely dependent upon the fees of his parishioners and the labour of his own hands. The provision of a regular stipend—inadequate as this may seem—was only made possible by the creation of a General Ecclesiastical Fund deriving its income from confiscated monastic property and lands; and while the anti-monastic legislation of recent years has aroused considerable resentment among the monks themselves, there can be little doubt that the redistribution of wealth which it has involved has been of incalculable benefit to the Church as a whole.

Even in the towns the scope of the activities of the married clergy is strictly limited. There are a few married priests in Athens engaged in work of a type generally reserved for the monastic clergy; one of them, who presides over the press and information office of the *Apostoliki Diakonia* (the Home Mission of the Church of Greece) and has a son and a daughter who are both students of the theological faculty of the university, bears the title of *protopresbyter*—though this is rare in Greece. There are certain indications that the number of educated married clergy may before very long increase considerably; this has already happened among the Russians of the diaspora and elsewhere in the Orthodox world. It is, of course, from the celibate clergy that the bishops

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

## THE ORGANIC BODY

Dr. Holland, who was travelling about Greece in the year of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, relates that when he visited the Archbishop of Larissa the metropolis was filled, both in the morning and also after dinner, with people approaching the Archbishop, either as petitioners or to obtain an adjustment of differences; and describes how "on entering the apartment, each person knelt before him, kissed his hand, and frequently after rising repeated this ceremony a second time". The Archbishop's manner, in fulfilling this part of his pastoral office, was, he says, "mild and ingratiating, without any loss of dignity proper to his station".

The bishop, though he must be unmarried, need never have lived as a member of a religious community in the technical sense. The great majority of the Greek metropolitans are chosen from the archimandrites attached, in one capacity or another, to episcopal households. The title of archimandrite was originally confined to the superior of a monastery—the literal meaning of the word is 'ruler of a fold' (*mandra*)—nowadays, however, it is commonly conferred upon any priest-theologian. The Greek archimandrite is almost invariably a graduate either of the theological faculty of the University of Athens or of the Academy at Halki (the theological school at Salonica has been in existence only a few years). He may have taken the monastic habit on Mount Athos, or elsewhere, when scarcely more than a boy, and, showing promise of more than the average ability, have been sent to the university by his monastic superiors as a young deacon. Alternatively, he may have come to the theological faculty after completing the ordinary course at a *gymnasium* or hieratic school, in which case he will not, in all probability, be ordained deacon until he has finished his studies.

After taking his degree he will normally pass to the household of a bishop, whom he will serve either as personal deacon or as chaplain and *hierokeryx* of the metropolis. He will doubtless become an archimandrite and will be addressed not merely as 'Reverend Sir' but as 'Altogether-most-blessed'! (*Panosiologiotate!*) In due course he may be called to take charge of a large parish in Athens, to undertake administrative work of some kind, or to serve as a secretary to the Holy Synod. It is from this category of the clergy that most of the bishops are chosen —though a monk may be summoned from his community to be consecrated, and an unmarried lay theologian or professor is also eligible for election to the episcopate.

A small minority of the present metropolitans of the Church of

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



794 that he is 'going into the Church'. For the Orthodox, every Christian is in some sense called to be a theologian: to verify in his own life and experience the truths which are set forth in scripture and tradition; and although the bishop has, in virtue of his office, a peculiar responsibility for bearing witness to the *paradosis* which enshrines the saving truth of the Gospel, it is a responsibility that is shared by every lively member of the Church—by the laity no less than by the ordained ministry which is called to perform a particular function within the one body. In this connexion it may be remarked that monasticism, among the Orthodox, has never developed into a predominantly clerical institution. As in the early days of Benedictine monachism, the majority of Greek monks are peasants of little education; very few are in orders —a community of forty or fifty *kalogeroi* may well include only two or three priests or deacons.

[792]

From about 1936 onwards the voluntary religious movements, which had already obtained widespread recognition in the Athens-Piraeus region, as well as in several provincial centres of Old Greece, began to take an important place within the normal diocesan and parochial system but in some measure as supplementary to it. To-day their influence has spread to the remotest corners of the Kingdom of the Hellenes, and no balanced account of the organisation of the Church of Greece can fail to give a prominent place to these predominantly lay movements which (under the general supervision of the hierarchy and with full episcopal approval) now play so vital a part in almost every aspect of the Church's life and evangelistic work.

The more one sees of these movements and of their widespread influence, the more one realises how different might have been the present condition of the Church of England had the Methodists not been forced to go into schism at the end of the eighteenth century. There is indeed a striking analogy between the situation in Greece to-day and that of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* as it might have been had the Methodists remained within her fold and continued to receive the sacraments of the one body at the hands of their parish clergy while exercising, under the general control and supervision of the episcopate, a lay apostolate of their own. The tragic character of that schism cannot but be brought home to anyone who has lived and worshipped among Greek Christians during recent years, has seen the apostolic labours of lay men and women as theologians, preachers and catechists, and has realised that this Church—at first sight so rigidly hierarchical—is in

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

# VII

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## A THESSALIAN THEBAID

> It seems a place of such stupendious solitude, as if the situation thereof had been designed for the retirement of Monks or the Cells of Anchorites.
>
> PAUL RYCAUT

> For the Quiet and innocency of their Life, the natural Beauty of the Place, the Rocks, Mountains, Streams, Woods, and curious Plants, joyn'd with the Harmonious Notes of Nightingales, and other Birds, in whole Quires, celebrating, and as it were, welcoming the forward Spring, to speak the truth, so charmed my melancholick Fancy for a time, that I had almost made a Resolution never to part with so great a Happiness, for whatever the rest of the World could present me with. But, in conclusion, it prov'd too hard a Task for me, so soon to wean myself from the World.
>
> GEORGE WHELER
> *A Journey into Greece*, 1682.

133
361
●792
346

THE traveller who follows the shallow streams of Peneios beyond Trikkala, with its Byzantine citadel, towards Kalambaka at the head of the Thessalian plain, will observe, long before the ruined cottages and hastily improvised dwellings of that oft-destroyed township come into view, a singular group of fantastically shaped rocks rising abruptly from the plain. As he draws nearer and the mountains close in on either hand he will distinguish what appear to be human habitations occupying seemingly inaccessible sites among these monstrous crags and pinnacles. Above Kalambaka itself the limestone cliffs tower toward heaven, "asperous, craggy, and barren"; a few monasteries and hermitages clinging as it seems miraculously to the very brink of the abyss, in defiance alike of the violence of the elements and of the laws of gravity. These are the Meteora monasteries, so extraordinary in their situation that one is disposed to accept the local belief that God formed

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



these strange rocks for the peculiar benefit of the communities of stylites who, in the fulness of time, were to build their chapels and hermitages upon their barren summits. Assuredly, there are few places on earth so admirably fitted to serve as a refuge for those who are called to the solitary life and to the labour of the angels as this rocky wilderness above Kalambaka.

The early history of the monasteries is lost in obscurity. We cannot say at what period the first solitaries found their way to this remote corner of Thessaly. It seems clear, however, that certainly before the end of the thirteenth century, and perhaps considerably earlier, there were many hermits scattered about this wild region. *Stagbi* (as Kalambaka, the ancient Aeginion, was known in the Middle Ages), seems to be a contraction of *eis tous agbious*—the name is still preserved in the official title of the Metropolitan of Trikka and Staghi. It may have been many years before the unorganised eremitical life crystallised into anything in the nature of regular communities. Many of the monasteries trace their origins to the troubled epoch during the latter part of the fourteenth century when the Emperor of the Serbs carried on an intermittent campaign against the successors of Constantine from his base at Trikkala, a few miles further down the valley of the Peneios, and the desert of the solitaries was invaded by armed bands and by men whose warfare was not with principalities and powers. The hermits took refuge among the high rocks. How they first succeeded in establishing themselves on some of the apparently unscalable heights which are now surmounted by the crumbling ruins of their cells is one of the unfathomed mysteries of monastic history—though there are explanations to be heard in the mountain villages of Pindos.

Between 1356 and 1372 there came to Staghi a monk trained in the great coenobia of Mount Athos, Athanasius by name, who founded on the summit of the Platys Lithos—the vast mass of rock which towers to a height of more than 1,800 feet to the north of Kastraki—the monastery dedicated in honour of the Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour which has ever since been known as the Great Meteoron. As darkness descended upon the glories of New Rome, and the church of the Holy Wisdom—"the most fayr Chirche and the most noble of alle the world"—fell into the hands of the infidel, the desert blossomed and a flourishing group of monasteries sprang up among the barren rocks. The Great Meteoron prospered and served as a model for other foundations, thanks to the wisdom of its founder and to the benefactions of

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

## THE WATERS OF MARAH

175 the wife of the Despot of Ioannina, whose brother, Ioasaph, had come to
●792 Staghi as a postulant in 1388. By the sixteenth century there would
346 seem to have been as many as twenty-four communities scattered about the rocks.

The convent of St. Stephen, built on the site of a hermitage founded in 1312, lies on the farther side of a chasm spanned by a drawbridge. [406] In order to gain access to most of the monasteries, however, it was necessary to be hoisted in a net lowered from the gate-house of the monastery (commonly situated some 150 feet above the farthest point [417] to which the traveller could attain by his own unaided efforts), or to clamber up ladders somewhat imperfectly secured by long wooden pegs to the face of the precipice. Travellers' accounts abound in references to the perils of either means of ascent: to frayed ropes which were replaced only after a catastrophe had actually occurred, and to the horrors of ladders hung perpendicularly upon the face of the cliff, below which, as Curzon relates: "the precipice went sheer down to so tremendous a depth, that my head turned when I surveyed the distant valley over which I was hanging in the air like a fly on a wall." It was not until 1925 that, as the result of the construction of some rough tunnels and steps, it became possible to reach the four monasteries then inhabited without considerable hazard to life and limb. The alterations then effected are bitterly lamented by the present *Igoumenos* of the Great Meteoron, the Archimandrite Callinicos, as a misguided concession to episcopal infirmity on the part of his predecessor. It seemed very [406] doubtful, however, whether the combined energies of the few remaining monks would suffice to operate their ancient windlass at all effectively. Curzon (who visited the Meteora in 1834) speaks of the ten or twelve monks at Aghia Trias who pulled him up to their monastery with a rope thirty-two fathoms long, and of the like number of reverend stevedores who assembled at the bars of the capstan at St. Barlaam, and whose efforts had the somewhat disconcerting effect of lifting him off the floor in his net and launching him "out of the door right into the sky, with an impetus which kept me swinging backwards and forwards at a fearful rate". To-day, the largest community can muster no more than half a dozen monks, of whom two are well advanced in years.

A great transformation has indeed come about since the days of prosperity vividly depicted in an old print which hangs in the sadly dilapidated guest-chamber of the Great Meteoron. More than twenty

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



monasteries are there represented, each one inaccessible on its rock. Wayfarers seeking hospitality strive to attract the notice of monastic porters, remote and unheeding in their aerial gate-houses. Venerable bearded figures in flowing black robes dangle in nets above the abyss, or swing with grave and solemn motion upon rope-ladders; while their brethren labour unceasingly at windlasses and capstans high above the earth, and hoist provisions, firewood and travellers to their fastnesses among the rocks.

The Thebaid of Staghi to-day presents a very different picture: no more than four of the original twenty-four foundations are now inhabited. The history of the monasteries from the sixteenth century onwards is one long record of steadily declining numbers. There were interminable struggles for supremacy between the abbots of the Great Meteoron and the superiors of the hermitage of Panaghia Doupiani, who strove to retain their ancient title of 'Father of the ascetics of Staghi'. Discord rent the communities, there were disputes concerning the lands belonging to the monasteries, and before long the number of those inhabited was reduced to fourteen. The English travellers Holland and Hughes, who paid brief visits to the Meteora during the early part of the nineteenth century, found only ten remaining. During the further twenty years that elapsed before the advent of the Hon. Robert Curzon with his escort of brigands three more convents were abandoned.

As late as 1830 many of the caves which mark the perpendicular rock face were apparently inhabited: though whether by hermits or, as seems more probable, by refugees, is not entirely clear. Urquhart describes these cave-dwellings: some "like handsome houses, with regular landing-places, windows and projecting balconies", others, the smaller and meaner ones, "shut in with basket work, with a hole to enter by", and reached by curious ladders hanging like chains, some of which were drawn up when their lord and master was installed in his aerial dwelling; while those which were longer and gave access to the more elevated among the caves were pulled up fifteen or twenty feet from the ground and let down with "a strange clattering noise". All have been swept away and only the dark holes in the face of the cliff remain. By 1911 only thirty-eight monks were left, dispersed among four communities: the Great Meteoron, Aghios Barlaam, Aghios Stephanos and Aghia Trias. A monk from the Belgian monastery of Amay, who visited the Meteora in 1931, found the number of the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



monks still further reduced to twenty-one. A decade of war has added a catastrophic chapter to this melancholy tale of gradual decline, for it was not possible that the monks should remain aloof from the calamities which have befallen their native land during those terrible years. The day was long since flown when the monks could look down from the security of their rocky retreats upon scenes of slaughter and pillage as armies came and went on the plain below; and, turning away with the sign of the cross and a *Kyrie eleison*, go back to their labours. The unscalable heights were impregnable no longer.

I spent several days at the monasteries in January 1950, accompanied by a young theologian from the Russian Academy in Paris. Heavy falls of snow had blocked the Metsovo pass—the one road that leads north-westwards from Kalambaka across the heights of Pindos, connecting the plain of Thessaly with Ioannina and Epirus—and the cold was intense. We had slept the previous night at Trikkala, where the Metropolitan had shown us a number of charred manuscripts which had been salvaged from the monasteries. Our first concern upon reaching Kalambaka the following morning was to seek out the curate of the place, Father Christos Benda, whom we discovered wrapped in a blanket at his fireside. He was not a little startled at the sudden apparition of two Frankish visitors in the doorway of his cottage, and regarded somewhat gloomily our proposal to sleep at the monasteries for the duration of our stay, assuring us (not without reason, as we subsequently discovered), that the monks had little enough bedding to protect their own persons from the bitter winds which swept the exposed summits. He promised, nevertheless, to come with us to look for the *Igoumenos* of the Great Meteoron who was said to have descended from his airy retreat that morning in order to deal with some piece of monastic business. First, however, we were taken to see the fourteenth-century basilica with its remarkable marble *ambon*, and to visit the school, where we found classes of 150 children overflowing the one available building (which had perforce to serve as primary school in the forenoon and as high school for the rest of the day), and packed into two small chapels which had been furnished with desks. The children were delighted at the diversion caused by the appearance of the *xenoi*. Papa Christos carried us off in search of the abbot who was finally run to earth in a tavern where, monastic business satisfactorily despatched, he was disposing of a dish of vegetables.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

## A THESSALIAN THEBAID

An hour or so later we were scrambling up the chasm which separates the Platys Lithos from the adjacent massif of Drakospelaia. Hundreds of feet above us the walls of the monastery of St. Barlaam stood out, a ragged fringe of ivory, against the sky. The *Igoumenos* reined in his pony and pointed out to us the site of the monastic prisons, high in the towering cliffs above Kastraki.

"Your names once again, that I may remember them?"

"Boris and Petros."

"Boris and Petros", repeated Father Callinicos, readjusting the bundles of leeks which festooned his saddle, "*na eisthe kala!*"

"The *Kyrios* Boris", he went on, as we relapsed into single file, "is from Paris, and yet, you say is Orthodox?"

"He is indeed Orthodox, O *Igoumenos.*"

"But the Christians of Paris are of another dogma, are they not? Are they not Catholics?"

My exposition of the state of the Christians of Paris and of the condition of the erring patriarch of the west was cut short as the gatehouse of the Great Meteoron came into view in breath-taking perspective. We gained the narrow platform of rock at the head of the gully, immediately below the monastery, and Gregorios threw back his head and sent cries of *Agathangelle!* echoing and re-echoing among the high rocks.

> Having reached the foot of the precipice, says Curzon, we stopped in the middle of this dark chasm and fired a gun . . . which was intended to answer the same purpose as knocking at the door in more civilised places; and we all strained our necks in looking up at the monastery to see whether any answer would be made to our call. Presently we were hailed by some one in the sky, whose voice came down to us like the cry of a bird; and we saw the face and grey beard of an old monk some hundred feet above us peering out of a kind of window or door. . . . Presently, after a careful reconnoitring from several long-bearded monks, a rope with a net at the end of it came slowly down to us, a distance of about twenty-five fathoms; and being bundled into the net, I was slowly drawn up into the monastery, where I was lugged in at the window by two of the strongest of the brethren, and after having been dragged along the floor and unpacked, I was presented to the admiring gaze of the whole reverend community, who were assembled round the capstan.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

## THE WATERS OF MARAH

346 792 [406] *Autres temps, autres mœurs.* "Unhappily", said Father Callinicos, as we waited at the foot of the precipice and Gregorios unsaddled the pony, "there have been regrettable changes; formerly there was great security." The windlass, it appeared, was now used only for hauling up firewood and victuals. We took a last look at the leeks, now 100 feet above our heads, and entered the dark passage which gives access to the steps leading to the monastery. Agathangellos was awaiting us outside the now disused refectory: a youngish monk, clad in a tattered grey cassock and soft cap, who had come to the Meteora, we subsequently discovered, in 1939. He carried us off to the guest-chamber (little used in these days) and left us among the faded memorials [796] of former splendour while he went in search of refreshment. A few minutes later the insistent clamour of the *semandron* summoned us to vespers in the fine *catholicon*, dating from the middle of the sixteenth century, where Athanasius the Athonite, clad in the habit of a western monk, looks down from the apse—a fragment of an earlier church on the [262] same site, built by Ioasaph in 1388. A frugal supper of vegetables, [352] goats' milk cheese and bread followed, and afterwards we sat on [372] wooden stools round a fire of brushwood and talked to the *Igoumenos* and the other members of his little family, while Agathangellos busied himself in the kitchens, where cats as lean as the stylite saints depicted 792 in the frescoes of the narthex lurked in the shadows. Father Callinicos, we discovered, had been at the Great Meteoron for nearly forty years. There was one other priest in the community: a Father Theophylaktos who had lived in the Athonite house of Xeropotamou for several years as a simple monk before he was ordained and came to Thessaly in 1935. Another monk—also named Callinicos—had been carried off by the Italians and had died in exile. Apart from Father Agathangellos, the only remaining member of the community was a very ancient personage named Paul who appeared to lead the life of a solitary, and whom we but dimly discerned amidst the shadows of the church. Gregorios, who had accompanied us from Kalambaka, was no monk but a married man with a wife and several children, lately returned to their village in the mountains to the west of Trikkala. We encountered him again some ten days later, breasting a snow-covered ridge among the foothills of Pindos with a couple of heavily-laden pack-animals, and accompanied by a little troop of refugees on their way home after three years in Kalambaka.

[796] [346] Shortly after eight o'clock Father Agathangellos reappeared with a

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



huge iron lantern, to lead the way along rickety galleries and past rows of long-abandoned cells to the church. We shivered in our stalls while compline was shrilly chanted, without book and by the light of a single guttering candle, in the narthex. "They are so expert and ready therein", says Rycaut, "that they can run from the beginning to the ending without stop or hesitation, and gallop it over at that rate, that one must have a good ear and some skill in the Greek language, to distinguish the different sound of the words which they utter." As the monastic day ended, the monks emerged from the shadows of the narthex, and, one by one, filed past the *Igoumenos* to ask his forgiveness and blessing, and he theirs:

"Your blessing, holy father, and forgive me, a sinner."

"May God forgive you, holy father."

At the Great Meteoron, despite the gloomy prophecies of those who had tried to dissuade us from staying at the monasteries, there were plenty of blankets, and we slept soundly till, long before the dawn, the *semandron* recalled us to church for mattins and lauds. We groped our way towards the door of the narthex, slipping and stumbling on the ice-bound rocks and mindful of Father Agathangellos' parting exhortation to "avoid the edge of the abyss". The whole world seemed wrapt in an unfathomable silence—infinitely remote there floated up out of the vast emptiness at our feet the faint clink of a chain, where a mule moved restlessly in the camp at Kalambaka. We crept into the church with the unearthly chant rising and falling in our ears. Agathangellos, a candle held between his fingers, swayed back and forth at his lectern, a solitary pool of yellow light in the universal blackness; an occasional movement from the remoter recesses of the darkened church betrayed the presence of other members of the community. With the first pale light of dawn mattins gave place to lauds, and as a shaft of dusty sunlight pierced the darkness, picking out the gold and crimson of antique frescoes and bringing new life to limbs rigid with the cold, Father Callinicos, from within the sanctuary, took up the ancient hymn: "Glory to Thee who hast shown us the light . . ."

When the office was ended and we had drunk a cup of coffee and a thimbleful of *ouzo*, we spent a little time exploring the monastery, now stripped of all its movable treasures. Then, after taking leave of our kind hosts, we made our way to Aghios Barlaam where we were welcomed by the Archimandrite Ambrose and a young deacon named Bessarion. The *Igoumenos* was below in Kalambaka but would be back

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



later in the day. There was, alas! no bedding at the monastery, said Father Ambrose: everything had been carried off by the Communists, to equip a field-hospital which they had established in the mountains to the northward; "What is to be done? But we will find something for you when you return this evening."

We spent the rest of the day scrambling about the rocks and visiting long-abandoned monasteries and hermitages. At St. Nicolas—fast falling into ruin, and where one must tread with circumspection—we found a few paintings remaining in the two chapels and the refectory, as well as an iron chest containing liturgical books and an eikon of the Forerunner; elsewhere, nothing save slowly crumbling masonry and the all-enveloping silence. We paid a fleeting visit to Kalambaka and returned to St. Barlaam a little before sunset laden with cognac and cigarettes. Like the Great Meteoron, this monastery, which crowns the towering cliffs of Drakospelaia, was until quite recent times inaccessible save by net and windlass. It is a sixteenth-century foundation, having been built about 1517 by two brothers from Ioannina—Nektarios and Theophanes—on the site of the fourteenth-century hermitage founded by the solitary from whom the monastery takes its name. In 1950 it was inhabited by six monks. The *Igoumenos*, Father Christopher, told us he had been at the monastery for twenty-one years, and for another twenty years at a convent to the westward of Trikkala. He was seventy-seven—twelve years older than Father Ambrose, an Athenian who was ordained many years ago at Moni Petraki in the shadow of Lykavettos. This was the only one of the monasteries where we came across any novices. Father Bessarion (who came from a village near Larissa and who had seen service with the British army in the Middle East), had been received only five months earlier, as had another young deacon, a native of Chios. There were in addition two simple monks, one of them more than ninety years old.

That night it snowed heavily. Father Bessarion produced a threadbare carpet which, folded double, afforded us a little protection against the bitter cold; and he and a shepherd from Kalambaka, who was living at the monastery, kindled a huge fire which blazed on the open hearth of our cell until morning, while the wind howled along the deserted galleries, the ancient timbers groaned and shivered, and it seemed that an exceptionally heavy squall would send the whole monastery with its domed chapels and its frail scaffolding of cells and domestic buildings spinning off into the abyss. When daylight came we seemed to be sus-

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



pended in the void, without visible contact with the world which we had revisited the previous afternoon. We returned to the *Igoumenos'* cell and sat and talked around a brazier filled with glowing charcoal, while we waited for the weather to moderate. Father Christopher told us of his own experiences during the troubled years of war; how he had been thrown into prison at Trikkala by the Italians and had escaped by jumping from a window; how several years later he had been carried off by the Communists in company with some 300 men, women and children from Kalambaka, and had been in the mountains for six days before his release; he told us too of the great monastery where he had taken the monastic habit, and of its 366 cells. Father Ambrose joined our little circle and catechised us as to our age, our families, were our parents living, were we married or *agamos*: "Certainly marriage is of God; a soldier from England and a *koritsi* from Piraeus, and God joins them. Truly, this is a great mystery, as says the apostle."

So the morning passed and at midday Father Bessarion reappeared with bean soup and bread for our lunch. By one o'clock the snow had somewhat abated, and since the visibility had increased sufficiently to enable us to see the monastery of Rosani, 500 yards distant, we decided to set out for St. Stephen where we were expected that evening. The *Igoumenos* and Father Ambrose advised us to take the easier, though less direct, path by way of Kalambaka; but being reluctant to add two miles or more to our journey in such weather we insisted on following the path which keeps to the high ground. Father Bessarion accompanied us a little way, and then, since the weather seemed to be improving, he left us after giving us precise directions as to our route.

All went well for a time, despite the fact that the path was entirely obscured beneath the drifting snow, and Rosani (formerly the dwelling of an aged female solitary) gradually faded from our view. Shortly afterwards, however, the mist thickened until visibility was but a few yards, and it was not long before we were in difficulties. For a time we crept along the edge of the abyss, edging our way cautiously across expanses of bare rock scoured by the wind, a thin coating of ice affording none save the most precarious foothold, until it seemed that we must be within a stone's throw of Aghia Trias. Alas! there were no monks left to answer our shouts; no slight thinning of the mist afforded us a momentary glimpse of the encompassing heights such as would have sufficed to give us our bearings. For three hours we wandered in an unfamiliar world until, an hour before dark, the mist lifted somewhat,

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



that before nightfall we should be back on the windswept heights above Kalambaka and amongst the ascetics of the Thebaid of Staghi.

A little before three o'clock Father Apostolos and the village president bade us *kalo taxridi*, after accompanying us as far as the outskirts of the village, and we set out for Aghios Stephanos with a guide. The sun had vanished beneath the jagged rim of Pindos when we at last worked our way gingerly across the icy rocks above the deserted monastery of the Holy Trinity and came suddenly upon Aghios Stephanos, four-square upon its rock like the heavenly Jerusalem, and found the whole of Thessaly lying at our feet.

Vespers was drawing to a close in the church of St. Charalambos, which stands so close to the brink of the precipice that one could, it seemed, empty the contents of a thurible into Father Christos' chicken-run below in Kalambaka. We spent two nights at this monastery before setting out for the mountain villages of Pindos, and I returned alone for a final visit some ten days later.

Of all the monasteries now inhabited St. Stephen had, it seemed evident, sustained far the greatest calamities as the result of war. Sacked first by the Italians and later by the Communists, it was a mere shell of a building, its unglazed windows affording little protection—as we learned by bitter experience—against wind or snow. Its former guest-rooms were crammed with wrecked furniture and empty ammunition boxes, while the eikons in the smaller of the two churches (the chapel dedicated to St. Stephen) had been wantonly defaced. Almost everything of value had been carried off when the monastery was pillaged: vestments and plate, an ancient gold cross from Mount Athos, five horses and mules, 130 sheep, provisions and fodder, beds and bedding, pots and pans, crockery and cutlery, carpets, even the bee hives, and—needless to add—the excellent wine for which the monastery was renowned in former days. The few surviving monks lacked the barest necessities of life and it was hardly surprising that sickness should have taken a heavy toll of this and the other communities during the winter months. The *Igoumenos* of St. Stephen's was the Deacon Anthimos, who came to the Meteora between the wars from the great Athonite house of Vatopedi—"a good house and garden . . . snakes very big and long in it", notes Dr. Covel. There were also living at St. Stephen three simple monks—lay-brothers, as they would be called in the west—Ephrem, who had been a monk for twenty years, Eusebius, who was formerly a policeman, and Cyril. Whilst we were staying at the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



792 monastery there arrived from Trikkala a certain Papa Iannis, an octogenarian with three married daughters. He had obtained his bishop's permission to come and share the life of the monks (there being no other priest in the community). Finally, there was Basil, a layman of sixty-five, who, after spending his boyhood in America, had returned to his native Thessaly to serve more than one monastery as a resourceful factotum; and there were the inevitable stylite cats. The *Igoumenos* was plainly a sick man—it was little wonder, considering what he had been through during the last few years and the rigours of the life at St. Stephen's—and the morning we left the monastery there was not a monk capable of getting to his place in church for *mesonyktikon* and *ortbros*.

792 796 Life at the Meteora to-day is hard indeed, and under such conditions as prevail it is hardly astonishing that the liturgical life of the monasteries should exhibit but little of the dignity and splendour which one rightly looks for in a large and well-ordered community. We were none the less deeply impressed by the efforts which are made to maintain the regular course of the *opus Dei*. Night after night, while Kalambaka sleeps, the few remaining ascetics of the Thebaid of Staghi gather in the dimly-lighted chapels among the high rocks to perform what for the monk must always be his primary liturgy; morning by morning as the sun touches the heights of Pindos with new fire and the flickering candles grow pale in the first light of dawn, the great trinitarian doxology banishes the shades of night and unites heaven and earth, angels and archangels, sinful men and those whose warfare is accomplished, in a single bond of adoration:

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill towards men.
We praise Thee,
We bless Thee,
We worship Thee,
We glorify Thee,
We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory.
O Lord King,
O God of Heaven,
Father Almighty;
O Lord, Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,
And O Holy Spirit.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

# VIII

## NEW WINE AND OLD BOTTLES

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> There is no village or city . . . which is not surrounded by monasteries as if by walls, and the inhabitants are supported by their prayers as if resting upon God.
>
> *Historia Monachorum*

792

THE importance of the monastic life for the whole of the Orthodox world can scarcely be exaggerated. From the days when rumour of the heroic exploits of the hermits of the Egyptian deserts first moved men to forsake home and family and friends, and to go forth to do battle with the demons in those very regions which were held to be peculiarly their own, the ascetic life has never ceased to exercise its compelling attraction. The Orthodox Christian has always had the greatest veneration for the monastic ideal: it is only in quite recent times that the traditional view of the function of the monk and of his importance for the life and health of the whole body of the Church has been widely challenged. The great historic centres of Orthodox monasticism—the deserts of Egypt and the Judaean wilderness, the holy mountains of Sinai and Athos, the monastery of Studium, at the very heart of *oikoumene*, and the great *lavras* of Kiev and Moscow beyond its farthest confines—all these have exercised an incalculable influence upon the life of eastern Christendom.

Orthodox monasticism, though it has many different forms, does not consist of a multiplicity of distinct orders and congregations, each with its peculiar characteristics and sphere of activity. The western Christian who feels the call to the religious life may decide to test his vocation as a Carthusian, as a Benedictine, or as a member of an 'active' order such as the Jesuits or the Franciscans. The Greek simply becomes a monk. There are no 'orders' in eastern Christendom: no Order of St. Basil, as so many writers have mistakenly supposed. Thus Père Robert de Dreux remarks that all the Greek metropolitans and patriarchs "are chosen from among the religious of St. Basil, of whom there are a great number in that country", and speaks of Mount Athos as "inhabited

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



792 by a great number of the monks of St. Basil, who dwell there in great austerity". So too (to quote a more recent instance of the same error) Bardenhewer asserts that "the Basilians are the one great Order of the East", while the reverend author of *Eighteen Centuries of the Orthodox Greek Church* speaks of "the ancient unity of the Order of St. Basil, which has subsisted since his time with its original simplicity".

Such expressions as these rest upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of eastern monachism. Antony, the hermit of the Egyptian desert—not Basil—is the patriarch of eastern monks. Western writers have all too frequently been led astray by the supposition that the rules of St. Basil have exercised, within the context of eastern monachism, an influence comparable to that of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* in the west.

In actual fact this supposed analogy is without foundation. The writings of the great Cappadocian have, it is true, exercised a considerable influence upon the development of coenobitic monachism in the east: though for the working out of much that was latent in the original rules we have to look to the work of Theodore of Studium (759-826). There is, however, no one document which has moulded the growth of eastern monachism as the Rule of St. Benedict has shaped the religious life of the west. The essential character of eastern monachism does not depend upon the writings attributed to St. Basil, nor indeed upon any written rule, but upon a traditional observance which was slowly hammered out in the great centres of eastern spirituality and which was spread abroad throughout the Orthodox world from Sinai to Siberia.

The Basilian monk is a Frankish invention. The Orthodox Church knows no *Order of St. Basil*—only the order of monks: the whole company of those who have sought to follow the Lord Christ in poverty and nakedness and in the spirit of the evangelical counsels; those who wage war incessantly on the ramparts of the city to guard the Christian polity against the assaults of the enemy without.

In a certain sense one may say that all Orthodox monks and nuns are contemplatives: though it has to be recognised that western categories such as 'contemplative', 'active', 'mixed', etc., are not really applicable to eastern monachism, which knows of only one *activity* proper to the monk—the unremitting struggle of prayer and the ascetic life. The Orthodox Christian who takes the monastic habit does so that he may renounce the life of this present world and abandon himself to the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



792 ●
[779]

labour of the angels. A great part of the day and night he will henceforth devote to the *opus Dei*: the chanting of the divine office. For the rest, he will practise the prayer of Jesus and will be nourished upon the Gospels and the Psalter, the *Philokalia* (a collection of the writings of many of the great ascetics and fathers of the Church), and certain classic works of monastic spirituality—notably the *Ladder of Perfection* of St. John the Scholastic, Abbot of Sinai, which is read in every Orthodox monastery during the great lent.

Within this traditional framework there exist considerable variations suited to differences of personal vocation. Though the *coenobium*, or monastery of the common life (that form of eastern monachism which owes the greatest debt to the legislation of St. Basil and St. Theodore of Studium), has commanded the greatest influence, the coenobitic life is only one among several traditional patterns of asceticism which lie open to the Orthodox monk. Side by side with the regular discipline of the community there exist other forms of the monastic life which trace their origin not to Cappadocia but to the primitive hermits of the desert; and despite St. Basil's admiration for the coenobitic life it can scarcely be questioned that, amongst the generality of Orthodox Christians, it has commonly been the solitary who has been accorded the greatest veneration and respect.

To this day, a large coenobium (such as one finds on Mount Athos, for example) will as a rule possess several small, dependent *sketai*, where two or three monks pursue a manner of life that has seen but little change during the course of 1,500 years, and may have in addition one or two anchorites nesting in inaccessible caves amongst the rocks and following an observance of incredible austerity; these are the μεγαλόσχημοι—monks of the great or angelic habit—of whom Covel observes that they "never eat at most above three times in a week; whence they are emaciated to meer Skin and Bones before they quite leave this world; this extravagant Fasting being counted the very heighth of an Aschetick Life."

Such extremes of asceticism, needless to say, are not for all men. Towards the end of the fourteenth century there made its appearance on the holy mountain a somewhat relaxed form of the monastic life known as the idiorrhythmic. The idiorrhythmic monk is literally one who follows his own rhythm. He owns personal property and takes his meals (prepared, if he be well-to-do, in his own kitchen by a monkish servant), not in the refectory but in the privacy of his own rooms. The

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



792 government of the idiorrhythmic convent is normally vested in an assembly of senior monks presided over by two *epitropoi*. Such a system as this, although in certain of its features it recalls the loosely organised settlements of hermits of pre-coenobitic monachism, has in practice prospered chiefly in times of decadence. The true contemporary parallel to the settlements of the desert is not the idiorrhythmic monastery but the *skete*, or group of ascetic cottages, where the living traditions of Orthodox spirituality are preserved in all their integrity.

The great age of the idiorrhythmic monastery extended from the end of the fourteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth and was followed by a widespread reversion to the coenobitic pattern. Nine of the twenty ruling monasteries of Athos are now idiorrhythmic. There are, moreover, many Athonite monks who, though wearing the monastic habit, live after a fashion differing but little from that of the ordinary Greek peasant or fisherman. Many of them own their *kellia*, or 'cells'. A Greek prelate who wishes to retire to the holy mountain may purchase the lease of a cottage (commonly known as a *kathisma*, or 'seat') where he will pass the last years of his life with a monk or two to minister to his needs.

Between these two extremes lies the coenobium, the life and organisation of which differ but little in substance from the pattern laid down by St. Benedict. It should, however, be remarked that the Orthodox convent has never become a community of clerks: the overwhelming majority of Orthodox monks are to this day what we should call lay brothers; it is not even essential that the abbot should be in orders—though if he is not a *hieromonachos* he cannot claim the title of archimandrite but only of *hegoumenos*.

There can be little question that the ordinary regimen of the Orthodox coenobium, to say nothing of that which obtains in the *sketai*, is of a rigour which the average Frankish monk would find insupportable. A visitor from the Belgian priory of Chevetogne remarked, after a short stay at the celebrated convent of Mar Sabbas, that the diet was such that that of La Trappe would seem quite relaxed by comparison. Much, however, that western Christendom would now consider intolerably rigorous, the Greek peasant-monk takes for granted. "The contempt of food and drink and of a soft bed", as Chrysostom observes, "is a matter of no effort to many persons, especially if they have led a rustic life, and been brought up to these hardships from their infancy."

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

## NEW WINE AND OLD BOTTLES

As of Orthodox Christendom in general, so of the Church of Greece in particular, it may be said that the monastic life has been of quite unique importance in shaping her life and piety. This is no less true of the long centuries of the captivity than of the earlier and more formative ages of her history. Even to-day, when the monasteries are subject to widespread criticism, the ancient traditions of monastic spirituality persist and sometimes reveal themselves most unmistakably in precisely those circles where hostility toward the existing institutions—especially in their more idiorrhythmic forms—is most evident and outspoken. It needs to be remembered that the first stirrings of the new missionary spirit, which has had so notable an effect upon the Greek Church within the space of the last 100 years, centre upon the great monastery of Megaspelaion in the Peloponnese, and that Eusebius Matthopoulos, the founder of the Brotherhood of Life, was himself a monk of this convent, steeped in the ascetic traditions of his Church.

"There is no place where the *Greek* Religion is professed", says Rycaut, "so famous for Monasteries as that of Mount *Athos*; and indeed if we consider the number of them, and of the Religious belonging thereunto, it is not to be parallel'd in all the world . . . the grand Conservatory of the Christian Religion in *Greece*, and ancient austerity of living, and therefore not unaptly stiled by them *Ἅγιον ὄρος*, or the *Holy Mountain* . . . the high Pique or Peer whereof . . . is uneven, craggy, and as horrid as Caucasus."

Athos remains, after more than 1,000 years, the heart of Greek monasticism. Isolated and aloof, the life of the holy mountain moves to a slow rhythm which is as little susceptible of change or alteration as the constant surge of the waters about the rocky promontory, in whose narrow clefts and ledges the anchorites roost like wild sea fowl. In Greece one can never wholly escape from the all-pervading influence of Athos. One is always dimly aware of the holy mountain, brooding over the dark waters of the Aegean, its head wrapped in the clouds. At the very heart of fashionable Athens one may encounter a student-deacon from the *sketai* of St. Anne, or a stately *epitropos* in silken gown bound for the offices of the Holy Synod.

Thanks to its isolation, Athos suffered comparatively little from the ravages of war—though many monks endured imprisonment and ill-treatment, and considerable damage was done to monastic properties scattered about the mainland of northern Greece. The Communist revolution in Russia and the subsequent division of Europe into two

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



792 648 hostile camps have, however, already gone far towards transforming the holy mountain into a purely Hellenic preserve, and threaten wholly to deprive it of the pan-Orthodox character which it yet retains, despite the fact that for many years now every monk has been required to adopt Greek nationality. Three of the twenty ruling monasteries—St. Panteleimon, Zographou and Chilandari—are non-Hellenic convents, being Russian, Bulgarian and Serbian respectively. In former days these monasteries were amongst the wealthiest on the mountain; St. Panteleimon, in particular, with its numerous dependencies—some of the latter far larger than any other ruling monastery—could boast of more monks than were to be found in all the other convents together. All these alien monasteries, however, were dependent mainly upon the produce of lands which now lie behind the iron curtain, and to-day, cut off as they are from their sources both of supply and of recruitment, they are in a most melancholy condition.

Of all the thousands of Russian monks who once inhabited the holy mountain scarcely 300 remain. The majority of these are aged and infirm: many of them physically incapable of cultivating the vegetables, olives and vineyards which now form the monastery's only means of support. It is now more than thirty-five years since the monks have been cut off from their own land. A certain amount of assistance continued to reach Athos from the Russian community in Jerusalem, but this also has ceased since the property became subject to the jurisdiction of the Moscow patriarchate. With the passing of the years the position of the alien monasteries becomes more and more desperate, as the list of invalids grows longer, and fewer and fewer hands are available for the support of those who can no longer work; and greatly as one may regret the fact, the day seems not far distant when Athos will become a purely Hellenic community.

792 727 Mount Athos apart, the organised religious life has come very near to complete suppression in northern and central Greece during the last few years. I have already said something of the sufferings of the ascetics of the Thebaid of Staghi. The fortunes of two or three other important monasteries are not without a certain melancholy interest.

[361] Take, for example, the ancient convent of Eikosiphoinisses, which traces its foundation to the second decade of the sixth century: a vast walled enclosure on the wooded slopes of Mount Pangaion, accessible only by mule-tracks winding high above the marshes of Philippi. It is said that there were some fifty monks inhabiting the convent at the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



beginning of this century. Eikosiphoinisses suffered grievously at the hands of the Bulgars in 1913 and again five years later. All its flocks and herds were driven off and the monastery was looted of most of its treasures—precious manuscripts, vestments, holy vessels and reliquaries. There could, therefore, be little room for doubt as to the fate in store for it when the Bulgars again swarmed into Greece in the wake of the German forces in the summer of 1941.

The history of the convent from this time down till its destruction three years later is obscure. The pillage of its remaining property seems to have commenced about two months after the Bulgars had descended upon Drama and expelled the Greek clergy; a certain Botseph, Bulgarian *protosyngellos* of the metropolis, celebrated the festival of the Dormition of the Mother of God by stealing from the monastery a mitre, an ancient chalice, six silver crosses such as are used for the blessing of the waters at Epiphany, sundry liturgical vestments and ten manuscripts on parchment from the library. Some six weeks later several Bulgarian officers were moved to emulate the pious labours of this worthy ecclesiastic. They returned from their expedition to the heights of Pangaion driving before them a train of asses laden with clothing, furniture and other tangible fruits of their pilgrimage.

Another Bulgar, Sophronios Natseph, the *epitropos*, makes a fleeting and discreditable appearance upon the stage of Greek history on June 20th, 1943, on which day he despoiled Eikosiphoinisses of seventeen carpets, ninety-eight goats and as much bedding as he and his accomplices were able to bear away with them down the rocky paths.

The final chapter in this catalogue of infamy was written a little more than a year after this episode when, on July 13th, 1944—a few months before they fled from the scene of their barbarous crimes—the Bulgars set fire to the monastery and destroyed it utterly. Only the *catholicon* (which stood somewhat apart in the centre of the great courtyard) and a single block of cells survived the conflagration; the rest of the convent, including a three-storied edifice said to contain 300 cells, the bakery and the refectory (dating from the eleventh century), and all the stables and outbuildings were gutted. Before setting fire to the monastery the Bulgars looted it of everything of value and drove off all the live-stock. The library, which contained some 1,500 volumes, was reduced to ashes.

All the monks of this monastery endured great hardship and privation. One was executed by the Bulgars; another died as the result of the treatment which he suffered at their hands. The former was the *monachos*

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



792 727 Daniel—a native of Thasos, who had taken refuge in the village of Palaiochori, on the lower slopes of Pangaion, when the district was invaded by the Bulgars. He was tortured before being put to death. The other monk who perished was the *hieromonachos* Sophronios, carried off as a hostage to Bulgaria. The *igoumenos* of the monastery, Gregorios Katsivakes, fled with several other monks to the village of Nikesiani, a few miles to the northward. There he fell into the hands of the Bulgars and was carried off into exile in northern Bulgaria. After six terrible months he was allowed to return, broken in health, to Nikesiani where he remained supported by the alms of the people.

[669] When the occupation was over, Mount Pangaion—together with the heights of Chalkidiki (with which it enjoys easy communications)—became a stronghold of the *katsapliades*. The coastal road between Cavalla and Salonica was closed to traffic after it had been mined repeatedly, and all vehicles had to make a long detour to the north of Pangaion by way of Drama and Serres. The ruins of Eikosiphoinisses remained uninhabited. Only recently have a handful of monks gone back to the monastery which lies desolate like the city of the Philippians amidst the marshes far below.

A few miles to the north-west of Eikosiphoinisses and close to the town of Serres stands another historic convent, that of St. John the Forerunner. This, too, has fallen a prey on more than one occasion to the rapacity of the Bulgars. In 1918 the conventual library was looted and its chief treasures carried off to the Bulgarian monastery of Rila. Thence, in due course, they were returned to the Greek government, and (with a view to their greater security), distributed amongst the libraries of Athens. The cataloguing of the library of this Macedonian convent had, incidentally, been carried out some years before this calamity by one who was subsequently to become a well-known figure throughout western Christendom: the late Metropolitan of Thyateira, Germanos.

In 1941 the monastery was sacked by the Bulgars. The monks joined the innumerable host of refugees. Several are said to have died of starvation in the streets of occupied Serres. Others escaped to Nigrita, Salonica and Athens. Seven of them came back in 1945 and were joined by two novices. It was not long, however, before the monastery [669] was again attacked and pillaged—this time by the Communists. Every scrap of food and clothing was carried off to sustain the democratic warriors of the mountains. In view of the constant threat of further

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



raids, the Metropolitan of Serres arranged for rations to be sent daily to the monastery, and this state of affairs endured down till the summer of 1949, when it was considered safe to lay in stores once again. In the spring of 1950 only three monks were living in the convent: one of them a priest who could celebrate the divine mysteries. The other monks had been sent by the Metropolitan to serve in parishes of the diocese, where (owing to the very high proportion of casualties amongst the village clergy), the shortage of clergy was peculiarly grave.

All over northern Greece the same tragic history has been re-enacted time and time again. The monastery of Aghios Nikanor, Zavordas, lies at the heart of a barren and desolate region to the southward of Kozani, and within the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Grevena. Like so many Greek monasteries its situation is remarkable: the summit of a high rock set amidst the swirling waters of the Aliakmon. The remoteness of its site, far from the lines of communication, brought this convent through the years of occupation unscathed; isolation, however, afforded little protection against the Communists. The monastery was attacked and looted; everything of the slightest value was borne off to the mountains together with the convent's pack-animals and its 300 sheep and goats. The abbot, Father Gabriel Balayiannes, and an older monk named Gerasimos Stathopoulos were murdered, and the survivors fled to the village of Palaiochori (some four hours' journey from the monastery) where they were still living when I visited this region in the spring of 1950.

Southwards, over the pass which skirts snow-capped Olympus and connects western Macedonia with the broad plains of Thessaly, stands the ancient monastery of Panaghia Olympiotissa at Elassona. This, too, was pillaged, the monks driven out, the abbot severely beaten, imprisoned and sent into exile. In almost every diocese of Macedonia, Thrace and Epirus the few surviving monasteries and their inhabitants have suffered a like fate.

The Abbé de St. Michon observes that in his day the Greek monk was a patriot who fought for the independence of his country, and who was loved for virtues which belong more to the soldier than to the man of prayer. The cannon of Megaspelaion were indeed used to some purpose against the Turk during the war of independence, and Urquhart gives a vivid description of his arrival at the monastery of Lezini, in the guise of a "goul or spirit of the marsh", with twenty muskets and a nine-pounder full of grape trained upon him. Alas! the monkish batteries

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



have been allowed to rust these many years, and armed resistance, however effective it may have been a century ago against a lightly armed assailant, could have availed the monks but little in the face of an enemy equipped with modern artillery. The monasteries lay at the mercy of the *barbaroi*: an easy prey, holding out a tempting prospect of plunder.

Elsewhere in Greece the destruction and pillage of religious houses has been less universal than in the isolated dioceses of the north. The ascetic life still flourishes in many communities scattered amongst the islands and in the Peloponnese; one may still find convents where the unrelenting battle with the powers of darkness is waged with something of its ancient ardour and where the monk is still manifestly the guardian of the walls; but such houses, it must be confessed, are now few and far between.

It must not, however, be supposed that the present decline of Greek monasticism is wholly attributable to the effects of a decade of war. Long before the storm burst upon them in 1940 the Greek monasteries had, with few exceptions, been reduced to a sorry plight. At the beginning of the nineteenth century many convents were very wealthy. Since then the foundations of their economy have been undermined by the loss of their properties situated in Rumania, the Caucasus and elsewhere, and as the result of a series of confiscations by the Hellenic government dating from 1833 onwards. Although a portion of the wealth made available by these confiscations has gone to swell the General Ecclesiastical Fund, and so to benefit the work of the Church, this anti-monastic legislation continues to arouse acrimonious controversy not only among the monks but (for rather different reasons) among churchmen in general.

There are, nevertheless, few laymen who would oppose the diversion of monastic property to the furtherance of social and educational projects and the improvement of the condition of the parochial ministry. The contemplative life has few champions outside the *sketai* of the holy mountain. There are many who value the monasteries for their former contribution to the life of the nation, for their traditions of hospitality, and for their archaeological interest, but few indeed who now regard them as centres of spiritual power. The traditional monasticism has come to be looked upon—at any rate in the towns—as an out-of-date phenomenon, quite irrelevant to the needs of the present time.

This is true not least of many of the leaders of the new movements,

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



many of whom are outspoken critics of the monks. Everywhere the demand is for *activity* (in the western sense of that word): for training preachers, confessors and catechists, and for raising the standards of clerical education. The monks are looked upon as idle drones who make no contribution to the life of the whole body. Inevitably, such views (which are widespread to-day) have had a marked effect upon monastic recruitment, and postulants are but few. All over Greece the monasteries lie abandoned and falling into ruin; rambling buildings in remote mountain sites visited only by shepherds, or inhabited by a solitary *kalogeros*, more farmer than monk, tending his vineyards and his olive groves and watching over his flocks and herds.

It would, nevertheless, be rash to assert that the new movements which have sprung up and taken root within the last two generations are anti-monastic in character, however hostile they may seem to be towards the traditional forms of the monastic life. It is tempting to compare a society such as the Brotherhood of Theologians, Zoë, for example, to the friars who made their appearance in western Europe more than seven centuries ago and who were frequently no more sympathetic towards the old monasticism than is the Greek theologian of the present time. I shall have occasion to describe this brotherhood in some detail in a later chapter; here I would but remind my reader of the fact that its founder was himself a monk of Megaspelaion, grounded in the traditional observance of that monastery, and that its members (though they do not bind themselves by permanent vows) are celibate priests or laymen, living under a common rule. Despite its novel constitution and organisation the movement retains much of the spirit of the old asceticism, and, in some respects at least, has more of the nature of a reassertion of the fundamental demands of the ascetic life in a form appropriate to the needs of the present time than a denial of their abiding value.

Soon after my arrival in Salonica in 1948, I was warned of the errors of the Zoë brothers and their sympathisers by a very idiorrhythmic monk, who assured me that these unhappy innovators were seeking to persuade men that the path that led to salvation was strait and the gateway narrow: such language seemed to have a familiar ring!

If we confine our view to the relics of the old monasticism it must be confessed that the prospect for the future is melancholy in the extreme. Everywhere the old order is passing away; amidst the crumbling walls a few survivors linger on as aliens in an unfamiliar world. But what of

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



792 794 178

the new wine that is to be found in abundance within the religious societies? Is a new monasticism seeking forms appropriate to a changed environment? It is too early as yet to speak with any confidence, and yet there are signs that out of the present ferment may come something not so very far removed from the traditional patterns of the ascetic life.

Assuredly the passion for activity will have an end. It is but one aspect of that fascination which the feverish culture of the west holds for the modern Greek. Even now there are close personal links between the Zoë Brotherhood and certain convents in Old Greece and the islands where the ancient warfare is still waged with something of its first fiery ardour, and these may well prove to be of great importance for the future of Greek monasticism. We may be certain that the apostolic zeal and devotion which is so abundantly manifest within the religious societies will in time bring about a new awakening to the continuing need for men and women who will give themselves wholly to prayer. Then, indeed, we may hope to see a widespread revival of the monastic life that will people the ancient convents which now lie desolate and abandoned, and bring again the anchorites to the barren heights of Staghi.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



722 the small country towns which serve as centres for the ecclesiastical
362 administration. Here many of them remained for three years. Some, and those the most fortunate, were able to build themselves wooden houses or *kalyvai*; others were lodged in huts; multitudes, especially in Macedonia, lived (often twenty or twenty-five families together) in old Turkish houses; those who fared worst of all had to be content with hastily improvised shelters of mud and thatch, or even to pass the bitter months of winter in tents. By the end of 1948 the number of the refugees exceeded 700,000: for the second time within ten years a tenth part of the whole nation was homeless. The country towns were packed with refugees: not a ruined cottage or a stable but sheltered two or three families. Some words from Thomas Alcock's *Travels in Russia, Persia, Turkey and Greece in 1828-29* might well have been written 120 years later: "Nothing in Greece", says this traveller, "can more forcibly give an idea of the war that has been carried on, than finding on inquiry that not a third of the residents in any place are natives of it, but only sojourners there, till security is afforded them in their own birth-places."

727 The parish clergy fled with their people to the comparative security
793 of the towns, but the priest was a marked man and many failed to make good their escape. No less than 239 priests and monks were done to
[792] death by the Communists alone, and seventy-seven by the Germans,
[798] while a further forty-seven died at the hands of Bulgars, Italians or Albanian moslems. Of the total number of 363 the majority (297 to be precise) were parish priests: no single category of the population sustained heavier casualties in the slaughter of these years than the village *papades*.

793 "I triumphed", says De Quincey, "but infer not, reader, a condition
798 of joy or exultation." Not all of those who died were men of the quality of the heroic parish priest of the village of Megarchis, Papa George Skrekas, who was crucified by the Communists on Good Friday, 1947. Nor, needless to add, did every Christian who suffered for the faith during the first three centuries of our era embrace death with the ardour of an Ignatius or the serenity of a Polycarp. The Church of Greece has ever been rich in martyrs, and there are not a few names—unknown though they be to Christendom at large—which have been added during the last ten years to the roll of those who will be remembered in the mountain dioceses whenever the Church gathers for the eucharist:

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



created as it were out of nothing. Everywhere these institutions were hastily improvised in the face of desperate and clamorous necessity, and, more often than not, maintained with a heroic disregard for the universal lack of material resources, and a courage worthy of a St. Vincent de Paul.

In almost every diocese the bishop bore a heavy responsibility in this work of relief. Nearly always he exercised a close personal supervision over the various institutions which had come into being in response to the need of a people driven, for the second time within less than ten years, from their homes and lands; over the *estia* where for several years milk was distributed daily to thousands of refugee children; the *paidikos stathmos* where infants were cared for during the day; the distribution of clothing, black stuff for cassocks, soap, cocoa, macaroni, beans, sugar, boots and shoes—all the multiplicity of urgently needed supplies with which a host of relief organisations, societies, British and American towns and villages, and private benefactors sought to succour the people of Greece in their distress.

At Siderokastro, for example, the Metropolitan (who as assistant bishop of Salonica was an ardent supporter of the work of the Near East Foundation during the period between the wars), founded a small hospital where poor families could receive free medical attention, as well as a remarkable school of housekeeping for girls of marriageable age. Like all the Macedonian 'despots', the Bishop was president of the local branch of the national relief organisation known as P.I.K.P.A., and supervised the two centres from which milk and cocoa were issued daily to thousands of refugee children from the villages of his diocese.

At Edessa, in western Macedonia, the Metropolitan founded, shortly after the end of the occupation, an orphanage for twenty-five boys. This was originally situated in a house on the outskirts of the town, but during the heavy fighting at Epiphany, 1949—when Naoussa, a few kilometres to the southward, was sacked by the Communists and more than 600 of its inhabitants carried away captive to the mountains —this building was extensively damaged and rendered almost uninhabitable. The Bishop then established his orphans under the care of a monk in a dilapidated Turkish house next to the metropolis, and this was subsequently transformed into a permanent orphanage. Not content with this, the Bishop proceeded to found two further orphanages attached to nearby monasteries, as soon as the district was sufficiently tranquil

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



to permit the monks and nuns—who had taken refuge in the town of Edessa—to return to their respective convents. A fourth orphanage was established a few miles away at Iannitsa.'

So, all over Greece, there was heroic improvisation in the face of overwhelming material need; and, as at Edessa and Siderokastro, so in many another provincial town from the Peloponnese to the remotest fringes of northern Epirus and Thrace, the courage and initiative of the local 'despot' were factors of incalculable importance.

And yet, as I emphasised at the beginning of this chapter, preoccupation with the material needs of her children did not cause the Church to neglect their spiritual welfare. The feeding and clothing of the homeless and the destitute, the distribution of soup and the creation of hospitals and orphanages, went hand in hand with the preaching of the Gospel. The Metropolitan of Siderokastro was not content with his hospital, his P.I.K.P.A. centres and his school of housekeeping. Even while the issue of the long struggle with the Communists was yet in the balance—and the Bulgarian frontier lies barely ten miles to the northward of the town—the Lord Basil was organising his "Guardians of Spiritual Enlightenment" and pressing ahead with the construction of a *Christianiki Estia*: a building comprising a large hall, library, class-rooms and offices, which should serve as a centre for the already vigorous Christian youth movements of the diocese and for training catechists and preachers. He needed, as every bishop did, cassocks for his clergy, food and clothing and medical supplies for his stricken people; but he was anxious above all to obtain Greek New Testaments for his catechetical schools, and a duplicator which would enable him to send a weekly sermon to every village *papas* in the diocese.

So it was elsewhere. Nothing that I saw in Greece impressed me more deeply than the fact that it was so often in precisely those districts where suffering had been most acute, where destruction and devastation were most evident, that the life of the Church seemed to burn most brightly. Suffering and desolation, which in a people less profoundly Christian than the Greeks might have brought forth nothing more creative than despair, have in Greece borne precious fruit. Deprived of all worldly security and riches, the Church has been forced back upon the Rock whereon she is founded; has learned anew that there can be no resurrection apart from the cross—the instrument of shameful death which is yet the throne of the victor. Through prolonged suffering she has

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

## THE WATERS OF MARAH

795 797 Though the traditions which enshrine the saving truths of the Gospel had been handed down from generation to generation throughout the centuries of Turkish dominion, the life of the Church was nevertheless gravely threatened by corruption and decay. The ministry of the word had fallen into almost complete neglect even in Athens, while in the country districts sermons were all but unknown. The ordinary people were for the most part "ill instructed, or rather not taught at all, sermons and catechising rare amongst them, Masses and Divine Service hudled and run over in a cursory and negligent manner . . ."

793 797 The higher clergy, with few exceptions, paid but scanty heed to their pastoral responsibilities. By the eighteen-forties (owing to the long delay in the recognition of the autocephalous status of the Church of Greece by the Oecumenical Patriarch) the number of the bishops had declined until only four remained, and those well advanced in years. As to the parish clergy, one may read accounts of their ignorance that differ but little from those which Covel had set down 200 years earlier: "Most priests have no books by them, but only their Church Offices; and . . . all their Study is only to get them by Heart, which takes up so much of their time as they cannot attend to read or Study other learned books if they had them. . . . Their ordinary prayers and liturgies, like Parrots they commonly mumble and hurry over by heart, and use them very imperfectly, with strange variety and confusion."

[792] As for the monasteries, though there remained many holy monks and learned even in the darkest days, all too many of the *kalogeroi* were worldly and ignorant; jealous of their privileges, content with a merely formal discharge of the duties belonging to their state; drowsing in sunny galleries, cultivating their vegetables and their pleasant vineyards.

794 797 It is against such a background that we have to view the labours of that little company of priests and laymen who laid the foundations of what, in our own time, has become a nation-wide movement. The initiative in the growing revival of evangelistic and missionary activity that has characterised the last 100 years of the history of the Greek Church has come, not from the hierarchy—though many bishops have been whole-hearted supporters of the new movements—but from individual churchmen: lay theologians, monks and clergy. It is only very recently that an official 'Home Mission' has come into being, with the foundation of the *Apostoliki Diakonia* of the Church of Greece (not to be confounded with a far older movement of the same name which still flourishes in Salonica and the northern dioceses).

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5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

# XV

292

## GRAVE AND DIFFERENT GARMENTS

> The true, ancient, and flourishing Churches of Christ, being ever desirous that their Prelacy and Clergy might be had as well in outward reverence, as otherwise regarded for the worthiness of their ministry, did think it fit, by a prescript form of decent and comely apparel, to have them known to the people, and thereby to receive the honour and estimation due to the special Messengers and Ministers of Almighty God.
>
> *Canons of* 1604
>
> The parson's apparel . . . plain but reverend, and clean, without spots, or dust, or smell.
>
> GEORGE HERBERT

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361
[439] CAVALLA, the ancient Neapolis, where St. Paul first set foot on European soil, is a flourishing port, the chief centre for exporting the tobacco grown on the rich coastal plains of Thrace and Macedonia east of the river Strymon, the gateway to the Plain of Gold which stretches from the marshes of Philippi to the mountains to the northward of Drama. Great stone warehouses surround the harbour and give an air of solid commercial prosperity to the town, which boasts, moreover, two cinemas, a restaurant with plate-glass windows and chromium fittings, and a remarkable town hall in Hungarian baroque, apart from lesser amenities. Yet the pedestrian who pauses for breath after scrambling up the steps which give access to the metropolis, or who through some narrow break in the line of warehouses gazes out across the busy harbour and the waters of the Aegean, may observe—faint and barely discernible at midday, sharper and more clearly defined at dawn and towards sunset—a distant triangle rising from beyond the sea's rim: Aghion Oros, the holy mountain of Athos, "that is so highe, that the Schadewe of hym rechethe to Lempne, that is an Ile; and it is lxxvi Myle betwene".

[792]
[292] Thence, as from another world, come occasional caiques manned by singular bearded figures in black gowns and tall cylindrical caps;

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



mingling strangely with the merchants and tobacco-workers who throng the quays and sip ouzo outside the taverns which sprawl against the low cliff below the old Turkish quarter of the town. Here, under the canvas awnings, one may meet the visitors at close quarters; one may discern the strange aroma, redolent of incense, garlic, fish, tar, resin, the smoke of candles and the salt Aegean, which clings to their garments and persons, defying analysis. Here too the careful observer may note the unwonted mingling of ecclesiastical and nautical attire which characterises these monastic seafarers: a black gown parted to reveal a rope-girt cassock and sea-boots; the cuff of the seaman's jersey peeping from beneath the monkish robe. These seafaring monks from Athos are a race apart, rarely to be seen among ordinary mortals save on the wind-swept quay at Salonica, supervising the discharge of a cargo of timber, or munching sour herbs soaked in lemon in the harbourside taverns at Cavalla.

To the casual beholder, however, the ordinary Greek ecclesiastic is no less plainly a man set apart from other men. Whatever may have come to be sanctioned in the outward garb of Orthodox clergy ministering to congregations in America or western Europe, a rigid conservatism prevails throughout the length and breadth of Greece. Here, at least, far from the corrupting influence of the Frank, the holy canons are faithfully observed. This is true above all of those which relate to the use of (or, rather, abstinence from) razor and scissors: the notion lingers on that in the divine economy there is some mysterious connexion between the orthodoxy of an ecclesiastical personage and the length of his beard; a beardless bishop would be unthinkable. "All the Greek Ecclesiasticks", observes a seventeenth-century traveller, "count it a great Glory to have store of Hair on their Crown, and all about their Ears, as well as on their Beards; and many old Monks, Hermits, and Anchorets, have I seen at Athos and elsewhere with their Hair both very thick and very long." And Mandeville tells us that "the Grekis also seye, that wee synne dedly, in schavynge oure Berdes. For the Berd is tokene of a Man, and gifte of oure Lord." This fidelity to the letter of the canons and to immemorial custom gives the Greek cleric a sufficiently distinctive appearance. The *papas* with his straggling beard, his hair gathered up in a bun and his tall *kalymmafchion*, is a familiar and accepted figure in all strata of Greek society.

The outdoor habit of all the clergy, from the "Prelates and topping

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



793 Ministers" down to the simple monk, is substantially identical. It
292 consists of an inner *rason* (corresponding to the western cassock), very
[792] long and with narrow sleeves, often—but not invariably—belted at the waist. This is essentially an undergarment, and this it was that the metropolitan of a Macedonian diocese presumably had in mind when he returned some patterns of heavy black serge, which had been sent to him for inspection, with the comment that the cloth would be most suitable for making "warm winter underwear" for his clergy. Over it is worn a fuller gown with wide sleeves: the outer *rason*. The latter is always of black stuff but the inner *rason* may be of various colours. Purple and dark blue are often favoured by the higher clergy, while in
[792] the monasteries a grey cassock made of very light material is frequently worn. One abbot of my acquaintance (a resourceful and many-sided character) is accustomed to appear on Sundays and holy days decked in the purest crimson—a splendid sight for eyes grown weary of the joylessness of English clerical attire—while on lesser days he wears a fur-lined outer *rason* (if the season be chill) over a cassock of russet.
[183] Among a nation of individualists it would indeed be remarkable if one did not from time to time stumble upon minor sartorial eccentricities on the part of the clergy. These divergences from the norm of unchanging custom are never, however, of so radical a nature as to obscure the ecclesiastical character of their author. In Greece the priest and the monk are marked men, instantly recognisable to all.

793 I have already referred to the distinctive form of headgear in use
792 among the Greek clergy. This is simply a cylinder of stiffened cloth
292 about nine inches in height, most commonly known as the *kalymmafchion*. That worn by the married clergy is *surmounted* by a narrow brim, but the monastic form, sometimes called a *skoupbos*, is brimless. In Greece all the bishops as well as monastic clergy not actually residing in a regular community, wear the former type of *kalymmafchion*. Over this, on formal occasions, a bishop or an archimandrite will wear a long black veil known as the *epanokalymmafchion*. This, however, forms part of the monastic habit, and consequently is never worn by the secular clergy. In the monasteries a soft cap often takes the place of the more formal *kalymmafchion*, though, unlike the Russians, the Greek monks do not venture abroad thus attired. Dr. Covel notes, somewhere in his journals, that on Athos the priests and deacons knit their own caps.

792 An English visitor to the monastery of Megaspelaion in 1829, the
292

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1



*milordos* Thomas Alcock, comments unfavourably on the attire of the monks: "the want of neatness in the persons of these people", he remarks, "is too conspicuous", a failing our traveller denounces as one of the sure consequences of "an unnatural and unsocial life". Thomas Alcock, it is hardly necessary to add, found the mode of life and habits of Greek monks "little agreeable". "They flatter themselves", he writes, "that their recluse life places them out of the way of the vanities and vices of the world; but it may be doubtful if this retirement does not produce even more disgusting effects than any it may remove." Whatever may have been the condition of the monks of Megaspelaion in 1829, certainly to-day the great poverty which afflicts many of the surviving communities is sufficient explanation of some want of neatness in their members.

The costume which I have thus briefly described, inner and outer *rason* and the appropriate form of *kalymmafchion*, is the customary outdoor dress of the Greek ecclesiastic, regardless of his status or office: of the aspiring archimandrite, in silken gown and with rolled umbrella and brief-case, who hovers discreetly about the chambers of the Holy Synod, as of the village *papas* who labours at his plot of ground, or, with a train of pack-animals picks his way along the boulder-strewn bed of some water-course in trackless Pindos.

Within doors, though the parish priest may put off his tall hat and outer garment, he is seldom to be seen less formally apparelled. And in the mountain villages what more appropriate night-attire for an ecclesiastical person than a thick homespun *rason*: though holy tradition be silent and the Greek country parson abed be subject to no such irksome canonical prohibitions as his brother, tending his flock beneath the vigilant eye of His Beatitude the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is strictly charged that in the interests of decency, gravity and order, he shall not wear "any Coif or wrought Night-cap, but only plain Night-caps of black silk, satin, or velvet".

It is not my intention to embark upon a detailed description of the liturgical vestments of the Greek clergy. "It would be impossible", asserts Dr. King, "to give a description of the habits of the clergy . . . to an English reader without the assistance of figures: for as we have none which resemble them so we have no names in our language to express them by." The reader who would learn to distinguish an *epigonation* from an *epitrachelion* or would comprehend the mystical signification of

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

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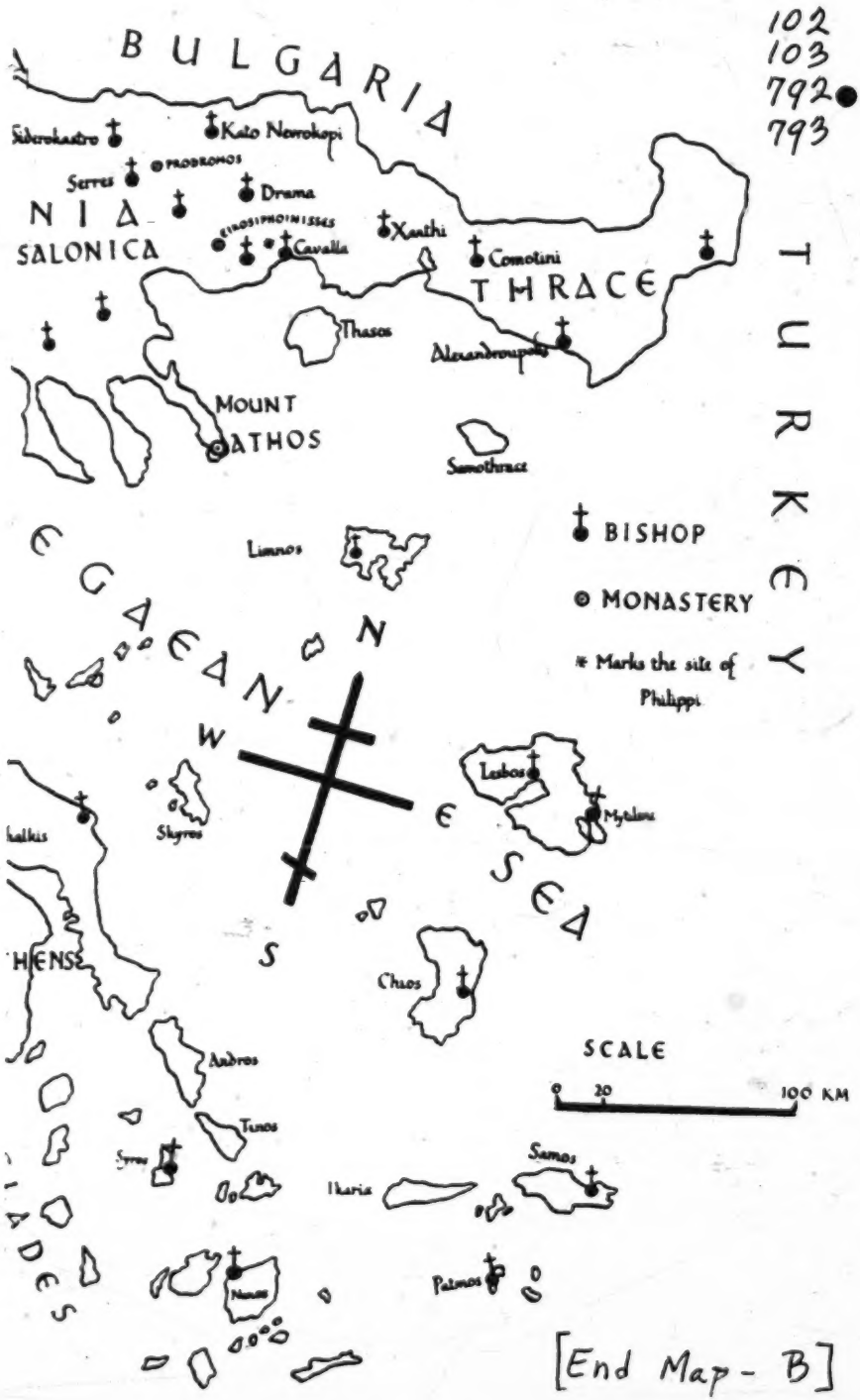
[End Map-A]

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1




[End Map - B]

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
Greece EHJ

# The Patron Saint

mummified remains were brought from the Church of the Archangel Michael as soon as the ships had sailed, and carried in a thanksgiving procession round the town.

Spiridione was a shepherd of Cyprus who became first a monk and then a bishop. He was born as long ago as the third century after Christ, and was one of the members of the celebrated Council of Nicæa in the year 325. According to legend he attended the meetings of the council carrying a brick—(did the holy man intend to use the brick as an argument ?)—and from this brick issued a magical stream of water and fire. From this time forward many miracles were attributed to him, so that after his death in the year 350 his relics were very highly prized. His body was exhumed, and after many vicissitudes reached Constantinople, whence it was brought to Corfu by a priest named Kalaichairetis and placed in the church of the Archangel Michael, where it still lies. This was in 1456. With Spiridione came the embalmed body of St. Theodora—also, apparently, the property of Kalaichairetis—which was placed in the cathedral. When Kalaichairetis died, he bequeathed Spiridione to his two eldest sons and Theodora to his youngest son. The latter, being a public-spirited individual, presented Theodora to the community

Spiridione, however, was handed down from generation to generation, and is at the present day the property of a well-known Corfiote family, who derive from the relics, so it is said, an income varying from £1,000 to £2,000 a year, made up of offerings from devout believers. The head of

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
Greece EM1

# To the Land of the Eagle

769 792 the family is always a priest and has charge of the church in which the relics rest, and, as I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of a Greek lady who knew the family well, I was able to arrange through her to visit the church on a certain morning and to have the sarcophagus opened for my benefit. She accompanied me herself, and brought with her two friends, a young man and a young woman, who had begged to be allowed to join the party on what was evidently a very unusual occasion.

PRIEST OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

346 The interior of the church[1] was cool and pleasant after the yellow glare of the Corfu streets. From the painted roof hung magnificent lamps of hammered silverwork, and on the shining parquet floor stood two massive candelabra—offerings, like the lamps, from those who had benefited, or believed they had benefited, by the intercession of the saint. As is customary in the Greek Church, there were no pews or chairs other than seats round the wall, and the building gained greatly in dignity by their absence. Pictures, deep-toned and mellow with age, decorated the walls.

771 While we were waiting for the sacristan to announce our arrival to the priest, a constant stream of worshippers entered the church—men, women, and children. With every appearance of devotion, they made a pilgrimage from one sacred object to the other, kissing each in turn, and finally entering

1 [containing relics of Spiridi'-150 one, see cat. 116, pp. 149-150--Analyst]